

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the previous amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 6-12 and 14 are pending. By this Amendment, Claims 5 and 13 are cancelled and Claims 1, 4, 12 and 14 are amended. No new matter has been added.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that Claims 5, 13 and 14 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

The Office Action rejects Claims 1, 3, 4 and 6-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over JP-07329182 to Suzuki. This rejection is moot.

Claim 1 has been amended to include a recitation of wherein the first pressing unit has a first engagement portion and the second pressing unit has a second engagement portion, wherein the first engagement portion and the second engagement portion have a first inclined face and a second inclined face respectively which engage each other, and wherein, when at least one of the first and second holding assemblies is driven to move in a direction that the holding assemblies separate from each other by the second movement unit, the supporting member gradually changes the pressing amount of the at least one of the first and second pressing units to the tubes by the first inclined face and the second inclined face slidably contacting each other while increasing or decreasing engaging force. This recitation is similar to the recitation in allowable Claim 5 and the relevant language in Claim 4 providing antecedent basis for the subject matter recited in allowable Claim 5.

Claim 12 has been amended to include a recitation of wherein, when pressing the tubes at the second position, a pressing position on the tubes is changed from the first position to the second position and a pressing amount to the tubes is set to be gradually larger corresponding to the change in the pressing position on the tubes. This recitation is similar to the recitation of Claim 13, having been indicated as containing patentable subject matter.

Thus, independent Claims 1 and 12 should be in condition for allowance.

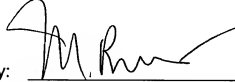
The dependent claims are allowable at least by virtue of their being dependent upon allowable Claims 1 and 12.

Withdraw of the rejection of record, and early of favorable action with respect to this application are respectfully requested.

Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

BUCHANAN INGERSOLL & ROONEY PC



Date: September 26, 2007

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